

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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## WILLING TO DIE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE ROSE AND THE KEY."

### CHAPTER LI. A WARNING.

THE old gentleman I speak of, I had seen once before; it was at Malory. He was that very Mr. Lemuel Blount whom I and Laura Grey had watched with so much interest as he crossed the court-yard before our windows, followed by a chaise.

As Sir Harry and I, at the end of our northward journey from London, arrived before the door of his ancient house of Dorracleugh, Mr. Blount appeared at the threshold in the light, and ran down, before the servant could reach it, to the door of our chaise. There was something kindly and pleasant in the voice of this old man, who was so earnest about our comforts.

I afterwards found that he was both wise and simple: a sound adviser, and as merry often as a good-natured boy. He contrasted, in this latter respect, very agreeably for me, with Sir Harry Rokestone, whom solitary life, and a habit of brooding over the irreparable, had made both gloomy and silent.

Mr. Blount was easily amused, and was something of an innocent gossip. He used to go down to the town of Golden Friars every day, and gather all the news, and bring home his budget, and entertain me with it, giving all the information I required with respect to the dramatis personæ. He liked boating as well as I did; and although the storms of the equinox prevailed, and the surrounding mountains, with their gorges, made the winds squally and uncertain, and sailing upon the lake in certain states of the weather dangerous, he and I used to venture out I dare say oftener than was strictly prudent. Sir Harry used to

attack him for these mad adventures, and once or twice grew as tempestuous almost as the weather. Although I was afraid of Sir Harry, I could not help laughing at Mr. Blount's frightened and penitent countenance, and his stolen glances at Sir Harry, so like what I fancied a fat schoolboy might be when called up for judgment before his master.

Sir Harry knew all the signs of the weather, and it ended by his putting us under condition never to go out without his leave, and old Mr. Blount's pleadings and quarrelsome resentment under his prohibition were almost as laughable as his alarms.

In a little time neighbours began to call upon me, and I was obliged, of course, to return these visits; but neighbours do not abound in these wild regions, and my quiet, which I had grown to love, was wonderfully little disturbed.

One morning at breakfast, among the letters laid beside Sir Harry was one, on opening which his face darkened suddenly, and an angry light glowed in his deep-set eyes.

He rapped his knuckles on the table; he stood up and muttered; sat down again in a little while, and once more looked into the letter. He read it through this time; and then turning to Lemuel Blount, who had been staring at him in silence, as it seemed to me knowing very well what the subject of the letter must be—

"Look at that," said the baronet, whisking the letter across the table to Mr. Blount. "I don't understand him; I never did."

Mr. Blount took the letter to the window, and read it thoughtfully.

"Come along!" said the baronet, rising and beckoning him with his finger, "I'll give him an answer."

Sir Harry, with these words, strode out of the room, followed by Mr. Blount; and I was left alone to my vain conjectures.

It was a serene and sunny day; the air, as in late autumn it always is, though the sun has not lost its power, was a little sharp. Some hours later, I and my old comrade, Mr. Blount, had taken to the water. A boatman sat in the bow. I held the tiller, abandoned to me by my companion, in right of my admitted superiority in steering, an art which I had learned on the estuary at Cardyllion.

Mr. Blount was not so talkative as usual. I said to him at last:

"Do you know, Mr. Blount, I once saw you, before I met you here."

"Did you?" said he; "but I did not see you; where was that?"

"At Malory, near Cardyllion, after the wreck of the Conway Castle, when Mr. Marston was there."

"Yes, so he was," said the old gentleman; "but I did not know that any of Mr. Ware's family were at home at the time. You may have seen me, but I did not see you; or, if I did, you made no impression upon me."

This was one of my good friend's unconscious compliments which often made me smile.

"And what became of that Mr. Marston?" I asked. "He had a wonderful escape!"

"So he had; he went abroad."

"And is he still abroad?"

"About six weeks ago he left England again; he was here only for a flying visit of two or three months. It would be wise, I think, if he never returned. I think he has definitely settled now, far away from this country, and I don't think we are likely to see his face again. You're not keeping her near enough to the wind."

I was curious to learn more about this Mr. Marston, of whom Mr. Carmel, and Laura Grey—each judging him, no doubt, from totally different facts, and from points of view so dissimilar—had expressed such singularly ill opinions.

"You know Mr. Marston pretty well, do you?" I asked.

"Yes, very well; I have been trying to do him a service," answered Mr. Blount. "See, see, there; see—those can't be wild ducks? Blessed are the peace-makers. I wish I could, and I think I may. Now, I think you may put her about, eh?"

I did as he advised.

"I have heard people speak ill of that

Mr. Marston," I said; "do you know any reason why he should not be liked?"

"Why, yes; that is by people who sit in judgment upon their neighbours; he has been an ill friend to himself; I know but one bad blot he has made, and that, I happen to be aware, hurt no one on earth but himself; but there is no use in talking about him, it vexes me."

"Only one thing more; where is he now?"

"In America. Put this over your feet, please; the air is cold; allow me to arrange it. Ay, the Atlantic is wide enough; let him rest; out of sight, out of mind, for the present at least, and so best."

Our talk now turned upon other subjects, and returned no more to Mr. Marston during our sail.

In this house, as in most other old country houses, there is a room that calls itself the library. It had been assigned to Mr. Blount as his special apartment. He had made me free of it; either to sit there and read, whenever I should take a fancy to do so; or to take away any of the books to the drawing-room. My life was as quiet and humdrum as life could be; but never was mortal in the enjoyment of more absolute liberty. Except in the matter of drowning myself and Mr. Blount in the mere, I could do in all respects exactly as I pleased; dear old Rebecca Torkill was established as a retainer of the house, to my great comfort; she talked me to sleep every night, and drank a cup of tea with me every afternoon in my room. The quietude and seclusion of my life recalled my early days, and the peaceful routine of Malory. Of course, a time might come when I should like all this changed a little; for the present, it was the only life I thought endurable.

About a week after my conversation with Mr. Blount during our sail, Sir Harry Rokestone was called away for a short time by business; and I had not been for many days in the enjoyment of my tête-à-tête with Mr. Blount, when there occurred an incident which troubled me extremely, and was followed by a state of vague suspense and alarm such as I never expected to have known in that quiet region.

One morning, as I sat at breakfast with Mr. Blount for my vis-à-vis, and no one by but the servant who had just handed us our letters, I found before me an envelope addressed with a singularity that struck me as a little ominous.

The direction was traced, not in the ordi-

nary handwriting, but in Roman characters, in imitation of printing; and the penmanship was thin and feeble, but quite accurate enough to show that it was not the work of a child.

I was already cudgelling my brains to discover whether I could remember among my friends any waggish person who might play me a trick of this kind; but I could recollect no one; especially at a time when my mourning would have made jesting of that kind so inopportune. Odder still, it bore the Malory post-mark, and unaccountable as this was, its contents were still more so.

They were penned in the same Roman character, and to the following effect:

MISS WARE,—Within the next ten days, a person will probably visit Golden Friars, who intends you a mischief. So soon as you see, you will recognise your enemy.

Yours,

A FRIEND.

My first step would have been to consult Mr. Blount upon this letter; but I could tell him nothing of my apprehensions from Monsieur Droqville, in whom my fears at once recognised the "enemy" pointed at by the letter. It might possibly, indeed, be some one else, but by no means, I thought, so probably as the other. Who was my "friend," who subscribed this warning? If he were not Mr. Carmel, who else could he be? And yet, why should not Mr. Carmel write to me as frankly as he had spoken and written before? If it came from him, the warning could not point to Monsieur Droqville. There was more than enough to perplex and alarm one in this enigmatical note.

#### CHAPTER LII. MINE ENEMY.

I WAS afraid to consult even Rebecca Torkill; she was a little given to talking, and my alarms might have become, in a day or two, the property of Sir Harry's housekeeper. There is no use in telling you all the solutions which my fears invented for this riddle.

In my anxiety I wrote to the rector's wife at Cardyllion, telling her that I had got an anonymous note, bearing the Malory post-mark, affecting so much mystery that I was totally unable to interpret it. I begged of her therefore to take every opportunity of making out, if possible, who was the author, and to tell me whether there was any acquaintance of mine at pre-

sent there, who might have written such a note by way of a practical joke to mystify me; and I entreated of her to let me know her conjectures. Then I went into the little world of Cardyllion and inquired about all sorts of people, great and small, and finally I asked if Mr. Carmel had been lately there.

In addition to this, I wrote to the post-master, describing the appearance of the letter I had got, and asking whether he could help me to a description of the person who had posted it?

Every time a new theory struck me, I read my "friend's" note over again.

At length I began to think that it was most probably the thoughtless production of some real but harmless friend, who intended herself paying me a visit here, on visiting Golden Friars. A female visitor was very likely, as the note was framed so as to indicate nothing of the sex of the "enemy;" and two or three young lady friends, not very reasonably, had been attacking me in their letters for not answering more punctually.

My mind was perpetually working upon this problem. I was very uncomfortable, and at times frightened, and even agitated. I don't, even now, wonder at the degree to which I suffered.

A note of a dream in one of my fragmentary diaries at that time will show you how nervous I was. It is set down in much greater detail than you or I can afford it here. I will just tell you its "heads," as old sermons say. I thought I had arrived here, at Dorracleugh, after a long journey; Mr. Blount and a servant came in carrying one of my large, black travelling boxes, and tugged it along the ground. The servant then went out, and Mr. Blount, who I fancied was very pale, looked at me fixedly, and placing his finger to his lip in token of silence, softly went out, also, and shut the door, leaving me rather awe-struck. My box, I thought, on turning my eyes upon it again, from my gaze at Mr. Blount, seemed much longer, and its shape altered; but such transformations do not trouble us in our dreams, and I began fumbling with the key, which did not easily fit the lock. At length I opened it, and instead of my dresses, I saw a long piece of rumpled linen, and perceived that the box was a coffin. With the persistent acquiescence in monstrosities, by which dreams are characterised, I experienced the slightest possible bewilderment at this, and drew down the linen covering, and discovered

the shrouded face of Mr. Marston. I was absolutely horrified, and more so when the dead man sat up, with his eyes open, in the coffin, and looked at me with an expression so atrocious, that I awoke with a scream, and a heart bounding with terror, and lay awake for more than an hour. This dream was the vague embodiment of one of my conjectures, and pointed at one of the persons whom, against all probability, I had canvassed as the "enemy" of my warning.

Solitude and a secret fear go a long way toward making us superstitious.

I became more and more nervous as the suspense extended from day to day. I was afraid to go into Golden Friars, lest I should meet my enemy. I made an excuse, and stayed at home from church on Sunday for the same reason. I was afraid even of passing a boat upon the lake.

I don't know whether Mr. Blount observed my increased depression; we played our hit of backgammon, nevertheless, as usual in the evening, and took, when the weather was not boisterous, our little sail on the lake.

I heard from the rector's wife. She was not able, any more than the Cardyllion postmaster, to throw the least light upon my letter. Mr. Carmel had not been in that part of the world for a long time.

I was haunted, nevertheless, by the image of Mr. Marston, whom my dream had fixed in my imagination.

These letters had reached me as usual as we sat at breakfast. Mine absorbed me, and by demolishing all theories, had directed me upon new problems. I sat looking into my tea-cup, as if I could divine from it.

I raised my eyes at length, and said:

"When did you say—I forget—you last heard from Mr. Marston?"

He looked up. I perceived that he had been just as much engrossed by his letter as I had been with mine. He laid it down, and asked me to repeat my question. I did.

Mr. Blount smiled.

"Well, that is very odd. I have just heard from him," said he, raising the letter he had been reading by the corner. "It came by the mail that reached London yesterday evening."

"And where is he?" I asked.

"He's at New York, now; but he says he is going in a few days to set out for Canada, or the backwoods—he has not yet made up his mind which. I think, myself,

he will choose the back settlements; he has a passion for adventure."

At these words of Mr. Blount, my theories respecting Mr. Marston fell to the ground, and my fears again gathered about the meaner figure of Monsieur Droquille; and so soon as breakfast was ended, I sat down in the window, and studied my anonymous letter carefully once more.

Business called Mr. Blount that evening to Golden Friars; and after dinner I went into the library, and sat looking out at the noble landscape.

A red autumnal sunset illuminated the summits of the steep side of the glen, at my left, leaving all the rest of the cleugh in deep, purple-grey shadow. It opens, as I told you, on the lake, which stretched before me in soft shadow, except where its slow, moving ripple caught the light with a fiery glimmer; and far away the noble fells, their peaks and ribs touched with the same misty glow, stood out like majestic shadows, and closed the view sublimely.

I sat here, I can't say reading, although I had an old book open upon my knees. I was too anxious and my head too busy to read.

Twilight came, and then gradually a dazzling, icy moonlight transformed the landscape. I leaned back in my low chair, my head and shoulders half hidden among the curtains, looking out on the beautiful effect.

This moonlight had prevailed for, I dare say, ten or fifteen minutes, when something occurred to rouse me from my listless reverie.

Some object moved upon the window-stone, and caught my eye. It was a human hand suddenly placed there; its fellow instantly followed; an elbow, a hat, a head, a knee; and a man kneeled in the moonlight upon the window-stone, which was there some eight or ten feet from the ground.

Was I awake or in a dream? Gracious Heaven! There were the scarred forehead and the stern face of Mr. Marston with knit brows, and his hand shading his eyes, as he stared close to the glass into the room.

I was in the shadow, and cowered back deeper into the folds of the curtain. He plainly did not see me. He was looking into the further end of the room.

I was afraid to cry out; it would have betrayed me. I remained motionless, in the hope that when he was satisfied that there was no one in the room, he would withdraw from his place of observation, and go elsewhere.



I was watching him with the fascinated terror of a bird, in its ivied nook, when a kite hovers at night within a span of it.

He now seized the window-sash—how I prayed that it had been secured—and with a push or two the window ascended, and he stepped in upon the floor.

The cold night air entered with him; he stood for a minute looking into the room, and then very softly he closed the window.

He seemed to have made up his mind to establish himself here, for he lazily pushed Mr. Blount's easy-chair into the recess at the window, and sat down very nearly opposite to me.

If I had been less shocked and frightened I might have seen the absurdity of my situation.

He leaned back in Mr. Blount's chair, like a tired man, and extended his heels on the carpet; his hand clutched the arm of the chair.

His face was in the bright white light of the moon, his chin was sunk on his chest. His features looked haggard and wicked. Two or three times I thought he saw me, for his eyes were fixed on me for more than a minute; but my perfect stillness, the deep shadow that enveloped me, and the brilliant moonlight in his eyes, protected me.

Suddenly I heard a step; it was Mr. Blount; the door opened, and the step was arrested; to my infinite relief a voice, it was Mr. Blount's, called a little sternly:

"Who's that?"

"The prodigal, the outcast," answered Mr. Marston's deep voice, bitterly. "I have been, and am, too miserable not to make one more trial, and to seek to be reconciled. You, sir, are very kind, you are a staunch friend; but you have never yet done all you could do for me. Why have you not faith? your influence is unlimited."

"My good gracious!" exclaimed Mr. Blount, not moving an inch from where he stood. "Why it is only this morning I received your letter from New York. What is all this? I don't understand."

"I came by the same mail that brought my letter. Second thoughts are the best. I changed my mind," said the young man, standing up. "Why should I live the sort of life he seems to have planned for me, if he intends anything better at any time? And if he don't, what do I owe him? It is vindictive and unnatural. I'm worn out; my patience has broken down."

"I could not have believed my eyes," said Mr. Blount. "I did not; dear, dear

me! I don't know what to make of it; he'll be very much displeased. Mr. Marston, sir, you seem bent on ruining yourself with him, quite."

"I don't know; what chance have I out there? Out of sight out of mind, you used to say; he'd have forgotten me, you'd have forgotten me; I should not have had a friend soon, who knew or cared whether I was alive or dead. Speak to him; tell him he may as well listen to me; I'm perfectly desperate," and he struck his open hand on the back of the chair, and clenched the sentence with a bitter oath.

"I am not to blame for it," said Mr. Blount.

"I know that; I know it very well, Mr. Blount; you are too good a friend of our family; I know it, and I feel it, I do indeed; but look here, where's the good of driving a fellow to desperation? I tell you I'll do something that will bring it to a crisis; I can't stand the hell I live in; and let him prosecute me if he likes; it is very easy for me to put a pistol to my head—it's only half a second and it's over—and I'll leave a letter telling the world how he has used me, and, then, see how he'll like the mess he has made of it."

"Now, pardon me, sir," said Mr. Blount, ceremoniously, "that's all stuff; I mean he won't believe you. When I have an unacceptable truth to communicate, I make it a rule to do so in the most courteous manner; and, happily, I have, hitherto, found the laws of truth and of politeness always reconcilable; he has told me, my dear sir, fifty times, that you are a great deal too selfish ever to hurt yourself. There is no use, then, in trying, if I may be permitted the phrase, to bully him. If you seek, with the smallest chance of success, to make an impression upon Sir Harry Rokestone, you must approach him in a spirit totally unlike that. I'll tell you what you must do. Write me a penitent letter, asking my intercession, and if you can make, with perfect sincerity, fair promises for the future, and carefully avoid the smallest evidence of the spirit you chose to display in your last—and it is very strange if you have learned nothing—I'll try again what I can do."

The young man advanced, and took Mr. Blount's hand and wrung it fervently.

I don't think Mr. Blount returned the demonstration with equal warmth. He was rather passive on the occasion.

"Is he—here?" asked Mr. Marston.

"No, and you must not remain an hour in

this house, nor at Golden Friars, nor shall you go to London, but to some perfectly quiet place; write to me, from thence, a letter such as I have described, and I will lay it before him, with such representations of my own as perhaps may weigh with him, and we shall soon know what will come of it. Have the servants seen you?"

"Not one."

"So much the better."

"I scaled your window about ten minutes ago. I thought you would soon turn up, and I was right. I know you will forgive me."

"Well, no matter, you had better get away as you came; how was that?"

"By boat, sir; I took it at the Three Oaks."

"It is all the better you were not in the town; I should not like him to know you are in England, until I have got your letter to show him; I hope, sir, you will write in it no more than you sincerely feel. I cannot enter into any but an honest case. Where did your boat wait?"

"At the jetty here?"

"Very good; as you came by the window, you may as well go by it, and I will meet you a little way down the path; I may have something more to say."

"Thank you, sir, from my heart," said Marston.

"No, no, don't mind, I want you to get away again; there, get away as quickly as you can." He had opened the window for him. "Ay, you have climbed that many a time when you were a boy; you should know every stone by heart."

"I'll do exactly as you tell me, sir, in all things," said the young man, and dropped lightly from the window-stone to the ground, and I saw his shadowy figure glide swiftly down the grass, towards the great lime-trees that stand in a receding row between the house and the water. Mr. Blount lowered the window quietly, and looked for a moment after him.

"Some men are born to double sorrow—sorrow for others; sorrow for themselves. I don't quite know what to make of him."

The old man sighed heavily, and left the room.

I felt very like a spy, and very much ashamed of myself for having overheard a conversation certainly not intended for my ears. I can honestly say, it was not curiosity that held me there; that I was beyond measure distressed at my accidental treachery, and that had there been a door near enough to enable me to escape unseen,

I should not have overheard a sentence of what passed. But I had not courage to discover myself; and wanting nerve at the beginning to declare myself, I had, of course, less and less as the conference proceeded, and my situation became more equivocal.

The departure of Mr. Blount, whom I now saw descending the steps in pursuit of his visitor, relieved me, and I got away from the room, haunted by the face that had so lately appeared to me in my ominous dream, and by the voice whose tones excited a strange tremor, and revived stranger recollections.

In the drawing-room, before a quarter of an hour, I was joined by Mr. Blount. Our tête-à-tête was an unusually silent one, and, after tea, we played a rather spiritless hit or two of backgammon.

I was glad when the time came to get to my room, to the genial and garrulous society of Rebecca Torkill, and after my candle was put out, I lay long enough awake, trying to put together the as yet imperfect fragments of a story and a situation, which were to form the groundwork of the drama in which I instinctively felt that I was involved.

#### AERIAL POSTAL SERVICE.

THE most important of the indirect results, scientifically speaking, of the German siege of Paris, was unquestionably the impetus that was then given to the tantalising problem of aerial navigation. The circumstances of the case, unique in the history of the world, were such as to stimulate to the highest degree the invention and the energy of those within the walls. The difficulties which have commonly beset the path of the would-be experimentalist in aerostation were suddenly diminished or removed. The man who offered to supply the means of communication between the beleaguered city and the unconquered territories of France, was at least sure to receive a full and patient hearing. It was no longer a question of commercial profit and risk, but one of national prosperity and existence, which had to be solved.

None of the ordinary means of transit were available. No scout or messenger could traverse the triple line of the enemy's outposts, or the impenetrable screen of ubiquitous light cavalry beyond. The river, as well as the roads, was in hostile possession. The realms of air alone re-

mained free from any obstructions, save those which had hitherto baffled the ingenuity of man. Therefore the balloon, till then considered as a toy, came for the moment to be regarded as a device only second in value to gunpowder itself. At the express invitation of the Government of National Defence, several hundred propositions to construct and launch aerostatic machines of a manageable character, were submitted to scientific committees officially established. The doors of the more famous Academy were beset by clamorous projectors, and the tables of that learned corporation groaned beneath the weight of memorials backed, it is true, by formidable columns of figures, but in no instance based on even the most trivial of accomplished facts. The combined report of the scientific committees, so-called, and of the commission appointed by the Academy to examine into the claims of the different applicants, was of a discouraging nature. Those who had come before them were but theorists, too needy or too prudent to have realised at their own expense, even on the smallest scale, the dreams which they desired others to accept as certainties. One and all, moreover, however widely they might differ as to the best method of navigating the air, concurred in the single point of demanding a large and immediate subsidy from the government wherewith to commence operations. The perusal of this collective report decided the authorities unequivocally to reject the immense majority of the proposals. A brilliant exception was, however, made in favour of Monsieur Dupuy de Lôme.

Many concurrent circumstances appeared to point out Monsieur Dupuy de Lôme as the successful candidate. He was a man of mark, partly politician, partly savant, like so many of the celebrities of the Second Empire. He was also, himself, a member of the Academy of Sciences, and although not an experienced aeronaut, he had yet taken a fervent interest in all that related to the inchoate art of aerostation. But his chief claims to distinction were comprised in the fact that he was the first to plan and construct those iron-clad ships of war of which the earliest model was the once famous *Gloire*, and that, as a maritime engineer, his name ranked higher than that of any living Frenchman. The government granted him an instant advance of forty thousand francs, and placed at his disposal a lavish supply of machinery, materials, and skilled labour, while many persons

were found sufficiently hopeful to predict the most complete success as the result of his endeavours.

Monsieur Dupuy de Lôme, unfortunately for the success of an experiment conducted under conditions so auspicious, adopted a method known in France as the "*Système Giffard*," and which, having been unsuccessfully tried in 1852, had not even the merit of novelty. The aerostat, of varnished silk, was of an oval shape, and was intended to be inflated with ordinary coal-gas. According to the suggestion tendered, eighty years ago, by Meusnier, a small compensating balloon was introduced into the larger one, to keep the latter distended when the volume of gas should be diminished. Lastly, the motive power was to be derived from the manual labour of four men, working, two at a time, at a crank which caused a four-bladed helm to revolve in a manner similar to that of the screw-propeller of a sea-going steamship. The original designer, Monsieur Giffard, had relied for a motive power on a miniature engine driven by steam, and it was a natural apprehension of the risk entailed by carrying aloft a source of heat that induced his imitator, eighteen years later, to have recourse to mere muscular exertion. Modest as were the expectations of Monsieur Dupuy de Lôme (the speed anticipated not exceeding, in still weather, the moderate velocity of five or six miles per hour), they were disappointed by the sluggishness of the workmen employed in the manufacture of the balloon and its adjuncts, and the war came to an end before the mechanism was completed.

Driven to despair by the tardiness of the tentative experiments to solve the vexed question of aerial navigation, which were from time to time announced in the meagre journals of the besieged city, the Government of National Defence empowered Monsieur Rampont, Director-General of the Paris Postal Administration, to conclude such contracts as he might deem desirable for the building and launching of balloons of the customary type. There were then in Paris several men of considerable experience in the handling of these unstable structures, and among them was the well-known Nadar, whose balloon, the *Géant*, had two years before made a voyage to Belgium with nearly twenty passengers. There was also *Glorieuse*, the Belgian aeronaut, whose ascents rivalled in number those of his more celebrated colleague, while, beyond the limited

circle of these professionals, there were collected in Paris a number of the choicest seamen of the imperial navy, resolute, hardy, and willing to confront the perils and responsibility of a cruise, in an element more fickle than that to the caprices of which habit had inured them. Accordingly, fifty-four large-sized balloons were, at irregular intervals, despatched from within the fortifications of Paris, carrying with them, in addition to their human freight, with the needful supplies of ballast, instruments, and provisions, a grand aggregate of two millions and a half of prepaid letters.

It will be evident that, so far as regarded the transmission of news from Paris to the departments, the balance of probabilities inclined perceptibly towards the side of the French. It was but necessary to await a favourable wind, and for this purpose all winds but one were favourable. Towards the east, and towards the east alone, did the enemy occupy any great extent of country. Southwards, northwards, and to the westward of the endangered capital lay populous provinces hastily arming to continue the struggle with the invader. The blockading forces, except in rear of their conquering line of march from the Saar to the Seine, formed but a thin belt, impervious, but easily overleaped when once an altitude beyond the range of a rifled musket had been attained. The hopes of the sanguine population of Paris were at their highest when the first of their ventures made its triumphant ascent on October the 7th. This balloon, the first and the most noteworthy of the entire series, was called the *Armand-Barbés*. Its car contained, in addition to the men in charge of the aerostat, two weighty bags of letters from the central office in the Rue Jean Jacques Rousseau, a basket of carrier pigeons, purchased at an extravagant price by the authorities, and a passenger whose name was soon to be widely noised abroad—no other than Monsieur Gambetta, soon, as Dictator of the French Republic, to inspire with his own fiery zeal the lukewarm impulse of national resistance to the foreigner. The *Armand-Barbés*, buffeted by variable winds, occupied no less than four hours and fifteen minutes in the short voyage to Epineuse, where Monsieur Gambetta and his companions narrowly escaped capture by the dreaded Uhlans. The first instalment of the correspondence was intercepted by the Prussian patrols, while the fate of a consort balloon, the *Georges-Sand*,

launched on the same day, remains unknown.

On October the 12th, one week later, two balloons were let loose, and on the 14th, two more, one of which, the *Godefroy-Cavaignac*, reached Bar-le-Duc, in safety; its passengers, Monsieur de Keratry and his two secretaries, contriving to make their way securely to the French headquarters. Meanwhile the principal post-offices in Paris were beset by eager crowds, chiefly composed of women, who, with tears and urgent entreaties, implored the overworked officials to undertake the transmission of their letters to husbands, sons, and parents beyond the German lines. Nothing could easily be more piteous than the contrast between the confidence of these poor people, and the hazardous fashion in which the communications by post were inevitably conducted. Each balloon, as it parted from the restraining ropes, and floated, slowly revolving, down the wind, was as passively the sport of fortune as is the storm-tossed mariner on a raft, guided only by the waves and currents. The simple strategy of the most veteran aeronaut is bounded by certain traditional manœuvres, such as the throwing out of ballast when the machine threatens an untimely ascent, the expulsion of gas when he proposes to near the earth, and the dexterous casting of a grapnel to facilitate a landing which, at best, presents some of the rough features of a shipwreck.

Habit, and familiarity with danger, no doubt confer, as in all perilous occupations, upon the trained adventurer of the air an exceptional aptitude for availing himself of such casual advantages as may present themselves. His practised eye and steady brain enable him to survey, without dizziness, the country that is spread beneath him like a map seen through a diminishing lens, and to calculate, with some approach to accuracy, his elevation above the surface of the earth. He can endure also the numbing chill of the low temperatures to which he may be exposed by too lofty an ascent, and is indifferent to the nausea, akin to sea-sickness, which is engendered by the rotary motion, and frequent heaving of a wind-borne aerostat. In most respects, however, a picked seaman is, almost at the outset, a match for even an experienced aeronaut, so that the selection made by the Paris Government of Defence was by no means of an injudicious character. It is a matter of familiar experience that a good sailor possesses, not



merely activity and presence of mind, which his calling exacts, but also a readiness and fertility of expedients which appear extraordinary to a landsman. The hardy man-of-war's men who volunteered to take charge of postal balloons, did their duty bravely and intelligently, and the numerous mishaps that occurred should in justice rather be imputed to the inherent imperfections of the system than to any neglect on the part of those who fell victims to them.

With varying success, but with untiring diligence, the enterprise was renewed. Three balloons, the *Vanban*, the *Galilée*, and the *Daguerre*, fell within the outposts of the German army, and in the first instance only did the aeronauts succeed in effecting their escape; but for each of these three failures three prosperous voyages should be registered. More remarkable than these was the career of the *Archimède*, launched from Paris on November the 21st, and which, after repeatedly changing its course, in obedience to the veering wind, finally grounded in Holland, not far from the mouth of the Scheldt. This balloon had been with difficulty prevented from descending in Belgium, but the aeronauts, who had totally lost all reckoning of the route they had pursued, mistook the sound of Flemish speech for that of their German enemies, and, throwing out of the car the whole of their ballast and stores, contrived to prolong their flight for several miles. This voyage, however, was eclipsed by the more memorable one of the *Ville d'Orléans*, which balloon, leaving Paris on November the 23rd, incurred the imminent danger of being drifted off into the illimitable waters of the North Atlantic, and after long hovering over the German Ocean, at last touched ground in Norway, having thus surpassed the hitherto unexampled flight of what is known in the annals of aerostation as the *Nassau* balloon. Less fortunate was the *Jules Favre*, which, with its car and passengers, was sighted at different stations on the Cornish coast, and last seen off the Scilly Isles, hurrying out into the Atlantic before a north-east wind. The *Ville de Paris*, starting on December the 15th, crossed the Rhenish frontier, and fell in the former duchy of Nassau, but the majority of ventures proved successful until, on January the 28th, the last despatch took place.

Taken at the best, the process of intrusting human life and valuable correspondence to what is simply a huge fluttering bag filled with gas, is of a rough nature,

and produces rough results. The details of each voyage are painful, either in a humanitarian or a scientific sense of the word. There is waste of power, of exertion, of suffering, of property, and too often of existence. Each aerial flight entails exposure to fierce vicissitudes of heat, cold, and wet, to hunger often, and always to fatigue. Even a favourable descent is attended by bruises and uncomfortable sensations, that endure for weeks and months; while the precious letters have continually to be abandoned, or committed to the care of ignorant or greedy peasants, and the balloon itself is in most cases destroyed or deserted. As for the return voyage, regarding which so many confident prognostications had been uttered, it remained among those dreams that are never destined to be realised. Attempts were made, at Tours and at Rouen, to launch a balloon that should penetrate within the guarded walls of Paris, but the efforts of the too-ambitious aspirants proved utterly futile. Of the enormous amount of letters sent forth from the capital, the vast majority compulsorily remained unanswered. But what the utmost skill and science of a brilliant and ingenious population, disposing of very great resources, could not, by mechanical means, accomplish, was partly effected by enlisting in the service of mankind the unerring instinct of a bird.

Carrier pigeons, thanks to the existence of a society of professed colombophilists, were sufficiently numerous in Paris, although less attention had been paid to the training and preservation of the purer breeds than was the case at Ghent and Antwerp. Still many baskets containing pigeons were despatched by the various balloons which left Paris, and although some of these birds perished of cold and damp, and others fell into Prussian hands, it was computed that seventy per cent of the entire number were received in safety by the provincial postal authorities, and set at liberty to return to Paris with tidings from without. It is a statistical curiosity that, out of three hundred and sixty-three birds, only fifty-seven ever reached home, the remainder being wholly lost. The season of the year, with its inclemency and foggy atmosphere, was singularly unfavourable to the progress of the carrier pigeon, which requires clear air and an unclouded sky to exercise in perfection his astonishing powers of vision, but such of these winged voyagers as did arrive brought with them

the only letters which entered Paris during the blockade, and which, photographed on a scale of extreme minuteness on thin sheets of collodion, twenty of which could be lodged in a quill attached to the pigeon, were afterwards enlarged by the aid of the camera.

In the mean time another beleaguered city, on which the eyes of Europe were fixed with almost as keen an anxiety as that with which the investment of Paris was contemplated, was cut off from communicating with the realm of which it formed a bulwark and a rallying point of defence. Metz, with her impregnable fortifications, under the shadow of which the finest army of France had been gathered, lay completely secluded from the rest of the country. It was natural that some effort should be made to break the unnatural silence that prevailed, and to communicate the hopes, the fears, and the projects of those within the fortified place to their countrymen and well-wishers. It was a medical officer of the garrison, Monsieur Jeannel, holding the rank of pharmacien-major, to which no English military equivalent exists, who first conceived the idea of organising a post that should be independent of the enemy's possession of the roads. The notion of using, as at Paris, an aerial machine capable of being directed at will, or a balloon of sufficient capacity to support one or many men, could not for a single instant be entertained. Metz, it is true, being the one grand arsenal of France, the head-quarters of her engineers and artillery, and the site of her schools for the instruction of the scientific arms of the service, must have contained a large assortment of tools and materials applicable to the construction of such engines. But the officials in charge of the stores, of whatsoever sort, manifested a marked unwillingness to permit any inspection of what was in their keeping, while the commander-in-chief maintained an inaction which has since become matter of history. Whatever was to be done must plainly be effected at the private cost, and by the labours of, an officer of the medical staff, and necessarily on a small scale.

Monsieur Jeannel, like a true Frenchman, began by asking for his humble enterprise the consent of his official superiors, and that of Marshal Bazaine was quickly notified to him through the medium of the chief of the staff, who took on himself the responsibility of making to the inventor, from the military chest, an advance of a

thousand francs. The workshop in which this miniature manufacture was to be carried on was installed in a loft over the military hospital of Fort Moselle, and there was no lack of volunteer zeal among those attached to the hospital administration, but, as usual, the physical difficulties of the process considerably retarded the realisation of the original design. Monsieur Jeannel's idea had simply been to construct small balloons, which might be capable of conveying a light load of letters, and which, if sent adrift on a day when the wind blew from a favourable quarter, could scarcely fail to fall into friendly hands. Even within the zone of the German occupation it might be expected that every Frenchman would find himself in a tacit conspiracy to speed upon its way the correspondence of his countrymen in besieged Metz. Each packet of letters was to be docketed with a distinctly written entreaty to whosoever found it to place the documents, at the earliest opportunity, in a French post-office, and it was probable that national sentiment would cause the request to be complied with.

But Monsieur Jeannel did not at first realise how difficult was the task which his patriotism and innate love of science had urged him to undertake. It is, *ceteris paribus*, a far easier task to build a large balloon than a small one. For the waste and imperfection which are almost inevitable incidents of the manufacture produce less sensible effects when the area of the envelope which is to encase the gaseous mass is much increased. And this is still more notably the case when the agent is so subtle and delicate a gas as the pure hydrogen which Monsieur Jeannel, like Gay-Lussac, eighty years before, had selected on account of its superior levity. Oiled silk, or, more correctly, silk which had been varnished over with a solution of gutta-percha or india-rubber in benzine, was the material with which the pharmacien-major first commenced operations. But this substance, hard, stiff, and heavy, proved eminently unsuitable for a balloon that was designed to contain, when inflated, but one metric cube of gas. Recognising the inappropriate character of this ponderous material, the inventor next had recourse to a balloon composed of lozenges of silk sewn together, and carefully coated over with collodion steeped in castor oil, of which a large supply was at hand. This expedient also proved a complete failure, since the balloon not merely proved weightier

than a corresponding volume of air, but the rapidity with which the hydrogen escaped was of itself sufficient to discourage a projector less tenacious of spirit than was the military apothecary of Metz.

The tendency of hydrogen, and especially of that produced by the action of acidulated water on iron, to escape from its place of confinement, has been for many years a stumbling block to the constructors of aerostats. Nothing appears more reasonable than, when preparing a piece of apparatus which derives all its value from its lightness when in action, to make choice of the lightest aerial matter for its inflation. Yet since hydrogen gas is difficult and costly as to its manufacture and its storage, it has been found practically more convenient to build much larger balloons for the purpose of employing the humbler and more economical agency of coal gas. It does not appear to have suggested itself to Monsieur Jeannel, however, to rely on anything less imponderable than the hydrogen, with a small supply of which he had already furnished himself, and all his faculties were now bent on discovering a suitable envelope to confine it. A large bag was next constructed of the tough tracing paper of which there was no lack among the drawing materials provided for the engineer school, and this tiny aerostat proved itself capable of an ascent, in captivity, which lasted for thirty-five minutes, when the gradual escape of the gas put a close to the experiment.

Insensibility to discouragement is a quality indispensable to an inventor, and Monsieur Jeannel proved himself to possess this inestimable faculty. The tiny aerostat was varnished over with medicated collodion, but the result was the production of a membrane too dry to cohere with the paper of the balloon, and it was not until a large admixture of ether had modified this inconvenient peculiarity that a fresh ascent was practicable. On this occasion the Lilliputian balloon was able to support itself in proximity to the ceiling for three hours, and some slight improvements having been effected in the manufacture, another of these diminutive contrivances was rendered capable of sustaining a weight of forty grammes of ballast for a space of no less than five hours. This was in itself a triumph for the originator of the scheme. For the velocity of a moderate breeze, calculated at the low average of five metres, or about sixteen English feet, to the second, would in theory

suffice to waft this toy of science, with its light burden, to a distance of nearly sixty English miles before the gas should be exhausted, while with a brisker wind nearly double that speed might be anticipated. This means of communicating with the world beyond the German leaguer offered every prospect of success, since a balloon of such small dimensions could scarcely attract the notice of the enemy's cavalry patrols, while it was nearly certain, on falling, to come into the possession of some one whose sympathies would be on the French side. When, however, Monsieur Jeannel informed the marshal commanding-in-chief that he was now prepared to forward head-quarter despatches to at least the weight of seventy grammes, he was met with a politely evasive reply. The cold shade of official patronage, in this as in so many similar instances, was destined to blight the more brilliant anticipations of the too sanguine discoverer.

Marshal Bazaine declined to intrust any documents of an official nature to the pigmy balloons of Monsieur Jeannel. But he authorised the latter to transmit, at his convenience, the private correspondence of the officers of the blockaded army, and the construction of the little aerostats was unremittingly pursued. If the chief of the beleaguered force was lukewarm or indifferent, such certainly was not the case with many of those under his command. Overjoyed at the prospect of communicating with absent friends beyond the limits of Prussian occupation, the besieged made zealous offers of co-operation in the work in hand, and a convalescent officer in hospital, Captain Marchant, undertook the voluntary duties of director of this aerial post-office. The correspondence of the army flowed in on such a scale that the means of transport could not keep up with the supply of letters, and Monsieur Jeannel and his military postmaster found themselves compelled to enforce with Draconic severity a regulation which limited each despatch to the slender weight of one décigramme. The volunteer administration distributed among intending correspondents a number of small oblongs of an extremely thin paper, known technically as pelure, which, when written over and addressed, were to be simply folded in two for transmission. Each packet of letters, wrapped in varnished paper, was legibly inscribed with a request to the finder to convey the contents to a French post-office.

The total number of these dwarf balloons constructed and launched by Monsieur Jeannel amounted to fourteen, carrying with them no fewer than three thousand separate letters, and precisely one-half of these reached the goal in safety. The total cost of the manufacture, inclusive of that of the preliminary experiments, was exceedingly small, giving an average of one pound sterling for each balloon sent adrift with its packet of letters. Nor did Monsieur Jeannel desist from his humble but eminently useful task, until the Department of Military Engineers had undertaken to construct, on a great scale, at the expense of the state, a number of large aerostats to accomplish in a more complete manner what the pharmacien-major had begun so well. It may be added that these government aerostats, each of which entailed an expenditure of from five to six thousand francs, were never finished, and that to Monsieur Jeannel's tiny fleet of aerial mail-packets was due the transmission of such tidings as were forwarded from Metz to the families and friends of the many officers there detained during the weary months of the blockade.

It is of course manifest that the forwarding of correspondence by means of balloons, whether accompanied or not by aeronauts, is an expedient not likely to be resorted to except in very exceptional cases. War and siege can alone occasion the pent-in population or garrison of a city or fortress to imitate the conduct of the mariner who, when his ship is in mortal peril, casts into the sea a bottle containing some written message which he hopes that tide and current may one day conduct to some friendly haven. But a time may come in which the experience acquired during the Franco-German war may need to be utilised, and when familiar modes of communication may have to give way to the strange and hazardous expedient of intrusting letters and despatches to the caprices of so unstable a medium as the air. Evidently no method hitherto devised is even an approach to perfection. The carrier pigeon, in spite of his marvellous instinct and surprising rapidity of flight, furnishes a statistical average of failure far above that of the balloon; and considering the economy and rapidity of the manufacture, it must be admitted that we have more to learn from the toy balloons of Monsieur Jeannel at Metz than from either the flying machine of Monsieur Dupuy de Lôme, or the more bulky aerostats, the ascent of which, from

Paris, served to inspire the populace of the capital with hopes not fated to be realised.

#### THE RING.

Ay, gaze on it, touch it, it is the ring  
I used to treasure so.  
The self-same stones were glistening,  
When you taught me their speech to know;  
To find Faith in the sapphire's deepening blue,  
And Hope in the ruby's sanguine hue,  
And the diamond flashed affection true,  
In the lore learnt long ago.

Had not the teacher an empire strange,  
The lesson a magic might,  
That thus I remember through wrong and change,  
Through treachery, chill, and blight?  
Ah! the sapphire still glows, though faith is fled,  
The ruby is blushing that hope is dead,  
And why, when the Love's last dirge is said,  
Should the diamond gleam so bright?

And has, indeed, no shadow past  
O'er the glittering toy you hold?  
The gems the same as you saw them last,  
The same the burnished gold,  
And yet you glance from it to me,  
As if the clue to a riddle to see;  
For how should the pledge on the finger be,  
When the heart to the truth is cold?

And that our love is cold, you know,  
Ay, cold as the touch of Death,  
And over its grave lies the smooth white snow,  
That melts not to passion's breath.  
Our moan is made, our tears are wept,  
So quick the dull grey mosses crept,  
We scarce could find it where it slept,  
When it perished of broken faith.

What, are the keen eyes dull or blind,  
That they ponder the puzzle yet?  
Can they not one silent token find,  
That duty has paid her debt?  
Ay, so; the god from his shrine is ta'en,  
Fond memory's plea was bootless pain.  
You look for the dark brown curl in vain,  
Once deep mid the jewels set.

Nay, hush man's proud impetuous thought,  
Man's jealous spirit quell;  
It was but with woe and folly fraught,  
Our wild youth's first love-spell.  
Let friendly hands clasp cordially,  
And friendly eyes meet fearlessly,  
And friendly tones say earnestly,  
"So be it, it is well."

#### SOME OLD ROGUERIES.

ROGUERY should be a profitless vocation with cheap newspapers and daily police reports to put us on our guard against the wiles of those who trade upon the simplicity of honest folk than themselves. Things were different two hundred and fifty years ago, when Master Thomas Dekker did his best, in his own quaint way, to open people's eyes to the devices of the wicked world of rufflers, upright-men, hookers, priggers of prancers, gulgroppers, rancke-riders, falconers, horse-coursers,



dommerats, glymmerers, and other oddly-named members of the fraternity of rogues when James the First was king.

Then, as now, thieves were of two kinds, those who robbed in defiance of the law, to fall sooner or later in its clutches, and those who robbed with the law's aid, and went scot-free to the end of the chapter. Of the two the latter sort were infinitely the worse; common thieves rarely robbed the same man twice, while the others devoured his substance piecemeal, and never left him till he was stripped bare as a vine in December. To this, apparently never-to-be-extinct order of rascality, belonged the gulproper, who, well furnished with gold pieces, haunted ordinaries, where gaming followed hard upon a two-shilling dinner. When the cards or dice ran counter with some scapegrace of means or expectations, the gulproper would beckon the unlucky gamester to a side window, condole with him upon his ill-luck, reminding him dice were made of women's bones, and would, therefore, cozen any man, but yet for his father's sake, if he wished to try his fortune again, he need not be baulked for want of a hundred pounds or so. If the spendthrift hearkened to the voice of the tempter, as he was pretty certain to do, the gold was quickly produced and handed over in exchange for a bond for something more than the amount lent, to be redeemed the next quarter-day. If luck turned and the borrower seemed likely to be able to pay up then and there, the gulproper sneaked quietly away to avoid the unwished-for settlement of his debt. He took care, however, to meet his young friend a day or two before the bond fell due to feed him with "sweet words," and make him believe a little delay in taking up his bond would be of no consequence. If acting on this belief the victim let the time run by, he quickly found himself compelled to choose whether he would go to prison, or give another bond for three times the amount of the original loan.

If a novice in dissipation was not driven by his own need into the usurer's net, his creditless companions had no compunction in bringing him to the same pass as themselves, to effect a temporary replenishment of their exhausted purses. They did not exactly ask him to do a little bill, though in the end it came to much the same thing. The wind was raised after a more roundabout fashion by the "taking up of commodities," in this way. Suppose four gallants who have spent all in riotous living, or lost all at the gaming-table, taking counsel together how

to re-line their empty pockets with angels. One of them suggests they should take up commodities; that is, buy goods wholesale upon credit to sell them for ready money immediately afterwards. The only difficulty is that, as the joint guarantee of the allied bankrupts would not be accepted for as many shillings as they want pounds, they must persuade some acquaintance of unbroken fortune or unmortgaged "possibilities" to help them with his name. Having caught their heir, he, taking his associates for birds of his own feather, under a cloud the coming quarter-day's sun will disperse, readily agrees to join in the merry venture. Then a "tumbler" is sought out and instructed to ascertain where five hundred pounds' worth of easily convertible goods may be obtained upon their joint bond. He knows exactly where to find his man, but after being absent long enough to have scoured the City, he returns with the alarming announcement that no goldsmith, draper, or mercer is willing to do business with them. He is told if he cannot get plate, silks, or cloths, he must get what he can, "brown-paper, tobacco, lutestrings, Bartholomew babies, hobnails, or two hundred pounds' worth of Saint Thomas's onions, and the rest in money." Then the commissioner contrives to find a tradesman to their mind, who parts with the goods in exchange for a bond, making his five customers jointly and separately answerable for the money being paid upon a certain day. And yet they are not happy. If obtaining the commodities was difficult work, to turn them into cash proves more difficult still. The tumbler's aid is again invoked. He goes, of course, straight to the seller, who offers to take back his wares at a discount of thirty per cent. The tumbler reports money is so scarce that no one will buy at any price, but by the luckiest accident he ran against a friend, who for a trifle of ten pounds will undertake to find some one to take the things off their hands at a difference of thirty pounds in the hundred. The offer is closed with, the wares sent off, the money received. Then the partners divide the proceeds between them, the original five hundred pounds—after deducting the hundred and fifty lost on the re-sale, the ten pounds paid to the tumbler's imaginary friend, and another ten pounds given to the tumbler himself—being represented by three hundred and thirty pounds, or just sixty-six pounds apiece. When the day of payment arrives, four of the five signers of

the bond are not to be found, as the bondholder well knew would be the case, and the poor greenhorn is called upon to pay the five hundred pounds or go to prison. Rather than do that, he seals to any bond, mortgages any lordship, says anything, does anything, pays anything. Then, "being a little way in, he cares not how deep he wades; the more he is trusted the more he comes in debt. Thus gentlemen are wrought upon, thus they are cheated, thus they are undone."

Shakespeare's jolly Windsor boniface becomes serious enough when certain English-speaking Germans, after having the Garter at command for a week, borrow his horses to go to meet their duke on his way to court, and, throwing Bardolph in the mire, "set spurs and away like three German devils or three Doctor Faustuses," and he is not much comforted at knowing that his brothers of Reading, Maidenhead, and Colebrook have been cozened in the same way. The false Germans belonged to the tribe of rancke-riders, described by Dekker as "horsemen running up and down the kingdom, ever in a gallop, their business weighty, their journeys many, their expenses great, their inns everywhere, their lands nowhere." These gentry usually worked six or seven together, two of them attired like gentlemen, the rest as blue-coated serving-men. Booted and spurred, with their clothes well splashed or sprinkled with dust, as if they had travelled many miles, the gang made their way to a good inn, the leader asking, in a loud voice, as they entered, if the footman had gone home with the horses, a question quickly answered in the affirmative by a respectful blue-coat. A few words with the host, and they were soon taking their ease in their inn, winning the landlord's good opinion by spending moderately without bating a penny of any reckoning. Meanwhile their blue-coated accomplices were busy making friends with the inn-servants, in the pursuit of useful knowledge respecting themselves, their master, and his other guests. Having learned all they wanted to know, the knaves became communicative in turn, and talked of their master's fine property in some far-away county (of which no one in the house was likely to know anything), and of the large sum of money he would carry home when the business he had come to town about was settled—a business likely to occupy him for three months, at the very least—this coming, in due course, to the innkeeper's ears, he became doubly attentive to the pair of rogues

in gentlemen's clothing, and they, gradually unbending, grew familiar with him, declared him capital company, and insisted upon him dining or supping with them, as happened to be most convenient. Just as the party began to wax merry, their mirth was interrupted by the entrance in hot haste of a half-breathless footman, bearing a message to the squire from some well-known great man living twelve miles or so off, entreating him to come to him without delay upon business that would not wait. Up jumped the squire, chafing and swearing because his horses had been sent home, cursing his folly in not keeping them with him, offering to pay anything to have himself, two cousins, and his men properly horsed, and be enabled to obey his dear and noble friend's summons, as became a man of his degree. Eager to be of service to so worthy a gentleman, mine host told him to take the best horses in his stables, and, before many minutes elapsed, the rancke-riders were in the saddle and off, as fast as their steeds could take them, to the nearest horse-fair; and before he awoke to the fact that he had been cozened, the innkeeper's horses were pastured a hundred miles away, and the thieves were quietly counting their gains over a bottle at a quiet country inn.

Here they would remain until the affair had blown over. Not that they were idle the while. Every well-to-do farmer or free-handed squire dwelling within walking distance of their lodging-place was pretty sure to receive a call from one or other of them; and while wondering what the fashionably-dressed personable stranger could want with him, find himself, ere he well knew it, accepting his visitor's invitation to take a turn or two in the garden or orchard, and listening to the plausible tale of a gentleman of better means than his outside betokened—one who had commanded in the field, but was eaten up, like many a good soldier, by the canker of peace, and lying at an inn not far off, had incurred a trifling bill there, which, for the credit of a gentleman, he could not leave unpaid. Might he be beholden to his kindness for the loan of forty shillings, to bear himself and his horse to London, from whence he would send him repayment in a day or two, with many thanks for the courtesy? Often the glib-tongued rascal got all he asked; but if his dupe proffered him half, he was not too proud to accept it, and thank the lender. Nay, the smallest of fish were sweet to such anglers—"they are the most con-

scionable market folks that ever rode between two paniers, for from forty they will fall to twenty; from twenty to ten; from ten to five; nay, they are not ashamed to take two shillings of a plain husbandman, and sometimes sixpence, of whom they have demanded a whole fifteen." Sometimes the streets of a quiet town would be startled by the apparition of a horseman, hatless, cloakless, with empty scabbard dangling at his side, galloping as if for dear life. When brought to a stand, with distracted looks and breathless voice he told from whence he came, and how he had been disarmed by villains, and despoiled of his gold, his silver, and his clothes. Such a thing might happen to any man, and believing it had happened to him, out came the purses of pitying listeners, until he was furnished with sufficient money to take him comfortably to his supposed journey's end, and with more clothes than covered his back when he started.

The "falconer" was a species of swindler peculiar to an age when dedicators paid for flattery in hard cash; as soon as authors looked to public, rather than private, patronage for reward, his occupation was gone. He was a mock author, cleverer than real authors, since he could make a good living out of what no one would buy. Having raked together sufficient material for a small volume, on the principle that a book's a book, although there's nothing in it; and written, or got some one else to write, a dedicatory epistle adapted for all conditions of patrons, our literary land-shark put it into the printer's hands. While his bantling was going through the press, he had time to make up his mind what county he should do, and to provide himself with a list of its titled and untitled gentry. He then had as many copies of his book bound as he had names on his list, each name figuring in its turn upon the dedication page. Procuring a fellow to play servant, hiring a couple of lean hacks, and disguising himself in scholarly garb, the rogue set out on his tour. Arriving at the nest holding a possible pigeon, the falconer alighted and knocked for admittance. The gate being opened, he left his companion to walk the horses in the outer court, and walking boldly up to the hall introduced himself to the most consequential servitor in sight, as a gentleman who had ridden from London on a matter of urgent business, to be imparted only to the ear of his worshipful master. Ushered into the latter's presence, he accosted him after

the following manner: "Sir, I am a poor scholar, and the report of your virtues hath drawn me hither, venturesomely bold, to give your worthy name as a patronage to a poor short discourse, which here I dedicate, out of my love, to your noble and eternal memory." As he ended his speech, the falconer presented the "bird," with a gilt-filleted, vellum-covered volume, with fourpenny ribbon streaming from each corner. Turning over the title-page, the recipient of the unexpected gift came upon his own name, standing out in bold letters over a flattering epistle-dedicatory, "as long as a henchman's grace before meals." Flattered by such an unlooked-for compliment from a London scholar, the unsuspecting squire could not do less than thank his visitor for his love and labour; and in consideration of the miles he had ridden, and the cost he had been at, tender him four or five angels for his pains, supplementing the gift with an invitation to breakfast; or, "if the sun-dial pointed towards eleven," to dinner. Making a polite excuse for declining the kind offer, "with thanks and legs, and kissing his own hand," the impostor took his leave, remounted his hack, and made for the nearest inn, where the spoil was divided, at the rate, in old player's parlance, of a share and a half for himself, and half a share for his assistant.

In term time, or when parliament was sitting, the falconer did not go so far afield, the game he hunted was to be caught in town. He ran a little more risk; a doubting gentleman, respecting his genuineness, might tell him to call again to-morrow, and despatch a messenger Citywards to see if the stationers of St. Paul's Churchyard were acquainted with such a book, and if they knew nothing of it, might even send the messenger on to the printer. That worthy, however, was prepared for such inquirers, and readily produced his stock; if the absence of the dedication were noticed, that was easily explained—the author would not venture to add that necessary appendage to his work until he had obtained the authority of his hoped-for patron. Some of these rogues avoided the expense of printing a book. They went into the waste-paper market to pick up clean copies of an unknown or forgotten work, only troubling the printer to supply a new title and a page of dedication in blank; inserting a name as occasion required by means of a set of letters they carried with them. Others, more economical still, travelled up and down the country with "witty

inventions written and engrossed on vellum, parchment, or royal paper, richly adorned with compartments, and set out with letters both of gold and on various colours." When they came to a nobleman's place, they would wait upon him, and present him with a copy bearing his name "fairly textured out in manner of a dedication." Taking it to be a special compliment to himself, my lord generally proved courteous; never dreaming any alehouse keeper might hang up the selfsame thing in his "boozing-room," if he chose to pay the price of copying it to the transcriber who supplied the rascals with their stock-in-trade. Then there were strolling schoolmasters going from town to town, setting up patterns of penmanship, and undertaking, with one day's teaching, to enable any one who came to them to write "as fair and fast as a country vicar who commonly reads all the town's letters." Their terms were half the fee upon a pupil entering his name, and the rest when the lesson was given another day. Having drawn his half-pay for doing nothing, the scamp took down his specimens and decamped; and when the would-be rapid writers came to be instructed, they found the schoolmaster was abroad and likely to remain so.

Ringling the changes is an old trick now, it was a new one at the beginning of the seventeenth century; at least Dekker thought it was, but we fancy we have read of something of the sort bringing rogues to the pillory long before his time. He describes his newly-discovered cheat as a creature with the head of a man, the face well-bearded; the eyes of a hawk; the tongue of a lapwing crying "here he is," when the nest is a long way off; the paws of a bear, holding whatever they once fasten upon; the swift foot of a greyhound, and the stomach of an ostrich, digesting silver as easily as that bird digests iron. With a good coat on his back, and other belongings to match, the "jack-in-the-box" appeared at a goldsmith's stall, in a draper's shop, or wherever he knew "good store of silver faces were to be seen." Drawing forth a handsome box, hammered out of silver plate, he opened it and poured out twenty or forty twenty-shilling pieces in new gold. While the shopkeeper contemplated the heap of worldly temptation, Jack explained that he was a gentleman having occasion for a supply of white money, but knowing not how suddenly he might be called to Venice or Jerusalem, he was unwilling to disfigure himself of gold, and would

gladly pay anything, in reason, for the loan of forty pounds' worth of silver upon the security of his angels. Knowing the pawn to be better than any bond, the unsuspicious citizen handed over the silver, and his customer departed with many thanks for his goodwill. A man of his word, Jack, in four or five days' time, brought back the borrowed silver, his box was produced, its angels counted, and the box set down while the shopkeeper counted up his white money. While he was so engaged, Jack deftly exchanged his box for one exactly like it, which poised in the hand seemed of the weight too, although it contained nothing but shillings. Presently the tradesman discovered the tale of silver was short by some thirty or forty shillings. Jack was astonished, but, gathering his wits together, remembered he had put by that very sum for a particular purpose and forgotten to make it good. The mistake could soon be remedied. Leaving his box with his friend he took back the silver, promising to return with it in an hour or two and redeem his gold. We need not say if he kept promise a second time. Master Jack would appear to have made a rare raid from Ludgate to Temple Bar, for Dekker thus apostrophises that famous City thoroughfare: "O Fleet-street! Fleet-street! how hast thou been trimmed, washed, shaven, and polled by these dear and damnable barbers! Many of thy gallants have spent hundreds of pounds in thy preserves, and yet never were so much as drunk for it; but for every forty pounds that thou layest out in this Indian commodity of gold, thou hast a silver box bestowed on thee to carry thy tobacco in, because thou hast ever loved that costly and gentlemanlike smoke."

We might fill another page with the tricks by which the lesser fry of roguery lived, but it would be wasting time and space—we have their prototypes among us yet, living, robbing, and cheating, much as they did in the old days, and as they will, in all probability do, as long as the world lasts.

#### RHYME AND REASON.

IN remarking that where ignorance is bliss, it is a point of wisdom to remain unenlightened, we don't pretend to originality. From the days of Adam downwards, few suns have risen and set without producing some fresh illustration of this unquestionable fact. We are concerned only with its novel application.



Has it ever occurred to the music-loving reader, as ranking among the more consoling dispensations of his experience, that four-fifths of the lyric effusions to which he has been accustomed to listen with unmixed delight, have been actually unintelligible? How might not his sentiments have been modified, could he have understood more distinctly the inane rubbish those accomplished vocalists and that skilled orchestra are doing their utmost to stifle and conceal?

The difficulties of libretto are too well appreciated to bear criticism in their relation to poetry. Poet and librettist belong not only to different schools, but different spheres. Shakespeare would have broken down, where Alfred Bunn revelled and ran. Shelley would have shrunk, like his own sensitive plant, from that sestet which, to Fitzball, would have been no more than the taking a pinch of snuff. When Sheridan Knowles, with a poet's rashness, once yoked his Pegasus to such a car, the grand old hunter refused the hobble and hop, and kicked the concern to pieces.

The powers of music are severely tested, in investing with anything like serious interest such morsels as the following, derived from a but too-faithful rendering of a French operetta, and representing the close of a scene, positively turgid with emotions of the most distressing kind:

FATHER. I must refuse.  
 LOVER. Nay, let her choose!  
 MARIE. Edward, ex-cuse—  
     My duty calls.  
 FATHER. Avoid these halls!  
 LOVER. List, my Marie!  
     To heav'n and thee—  
 FATHER. Fiddle-de-dee (!)  
 MARIE. 'Tis our love's knell.  
 ALL. Farewell! Farewell! (Exeunt.)

But the ballad-poet has less claim, if any, to indulgence, and wherefore this description of writer should regard and demean himself as the born foe of sense and reason, is among the mysteries not likely to be solved until the coming age. When time and foreign intercourse have familiarised us more with the lyric literature of neighbour states, we shall understand better why a love-song need not, as a rule, appear to be the production of a lunatic, nor a sentiment—touching and attractive in its native simplicity—be thrust into an ill-fitting fancy garb, and made preposterous. Why should not fact and fancy join hands and voices? If we love a woman, why invoke her as a fairy? As if true love were not a very tangible reality, why should we insist on investing it with all manner of theoretical accessories and mannerisms, the which—

if carried out—would be to the last degree embarrassing to the amiable party it was intended to propitiate? We will adduce an example or two. What but the immortal music that was designed to be wedded to the sentiments we are about to quote, would have saved them from perdition?

Not without a pang do we indict that cherished melody, Celia's Arbour, before the tribunal of common sense. Only when the last delicious murmur has died upon the ear, can we consent to take cognisance of the amount of nonsense veiled in those delightful strains. Four rational human beings have united in instigating a certain humid wreath to commit suicide—by hanging—outside an arbour in which a young lady, who has an imprudent fancy for sleeping in the open air, may be expected to pass the night.

An impression seems to exist that the first act of the young and hardy Celia, on rising with the dawn, will be to place the damp and dripping thing upon her head. In this very improbable contingency, the humid wreath is charged with the tremendous crammer—the most indefensible assertion—that the dew-drops, now shedding rheumatism on Celia's fair neck and shoulders, are, in fact, some gentleman's tears!

But, in fact, your true British ballad-writer is never happy, unless when entreating impossibilities. "Drink to me only with thine eyes," implores a voice familiar to us from childhood, proceeding to add other suggestions which might puzzle a council of conjurors. Reduced inexorably to prose, the programme might read as follows:

"Take a jolly good look at me, and I'll return it with interest.

"Leave a kiss, if you can hit upon any method of so doing, within the cup, and, in that case, bother the champagne!

"Whenever I am, literally, a 'thirsty soul,' I require nothing less potent than the nectar of the gods; but even if Jove passed the bottle, I would not change it for thine. (This, I know, sounds hardly civil, but my poet-friend and I mean exactly the reverse of what we say!)

"A day or two since I sent you a bouquet, not so much (once more I must appear discourteous) in compliment to you, as hoping that your acknowledged skill in the preservation of flowers might tend to their longevity.

"You, however, merely placed them to your lips, and then, for reasons not satis-

factorily explained, returned them to the sender. Nevertheless, I have the pleasure of assuring you that my rejected offering comes back to me, charged with a most grateful fragrance, imparted, I doubt not (indeed, I recognise it), by one or other of those charming essences which deck your toilet-table."

Be it far from us to poke fun at that old and ever-welcome favourite, Flow on, Thou Shining River. Our business is simply with the words, words to which we have listened with indulgence, as skilfully adapted to the half-sad, half-hopeful melody. But a poet's invocations, like a lover's perjuries, provoke Jove's mirth. Were the thousandth part of these reckless petitions complied with, the consequences would be very much beyond laughter to the sons of men. Let us see, for example, what would most probably have resulted in the present case:

Flow on, thou shining river,  
But, ere thou reach the sea,  
Seek Ella's bower, and give her  
The wreath I fling on thee.

We will imagine the polite stream assenting, and narrate what followed, in the form of a letter addressed by Ella, next morning, to a bosom friend:

The Bower, April 1st.

Oh, my darling Myra! such an adventure! Now, don't think I am dreaming, for here it is—the wreath I mean—but I'm so bewildered—hanging at my bed's head. I have the most awful cold, and can hardly write for sneezing.

Well, dear, last night, I was lying half asleep, listening to the distant murmur of that pretty little sparkling brook, beside which we have so often sat, talking of—well, no matter. Suddenly I thought the sound grew louder, nearer. I could distinguish the gushing sound of approaching waters, even the crash of objects swept into collision. I heard papa's window thrown up, and his voice sternly demanding of something, or somebody, what was the matter.

I had just jumped out of bed when Lucy broke into the room. "Oh, please miss, the Ripple's bust, 'as sweep' away the boat-house, kivered my lady's rose-garden, and's comin' dead up to the house. We shall all be drowned in our beds. Oho! Oho!"

We staggered to the window, and flung it open. It was perfectly true. The little Ripple, swollen, as I supposed, by yesterday's rain, had completely flooded our poor garden, and was just beginning to dash

against the house door. I had just time to utter one scream, when (now comes the wonderful part) a misty form seemed to rise before me, and a quiet gentlemanly voice accosted me thus:

"It is with extreme regret, my dear Miss Blank, that I find myself the author of such a domestic disturbance. I have been requested by my friend, Mr. Augustus Waddilove, who dwells on my margin, to wait upon you, en route to the sea, and present you with this garland"—passing a very pretty one through the window. "Having thus fulfilled my mission (I fear at some cost to your good father, my impetuosity being greatly augmented by the recent rains), I will at once withdraw, merely adding that I have taken the liberty of leaving a brace of very fine carp on the drawing-room sofa, and a salmon, fresh run, in the very best condition, on your father's study chair. The boat-house, I fear, is on its way to the ocean, beyond my powers of recal; but I am mistaken if some remarkably fine eels will not be found in the spot vacated by that edifice. Good-night."

The form seemed to melt away, and mingle with the retiring waters, which, long before day, had returned to their natural channel, and I could have imagined the whole a dream, but for the wreath, the frightful cold I caught at the window, and the fish, which, as the Ripple had mentioned, were found flapping about in the places described.

The damage done will be repaired, papa thinks, for about two hundred pounds, which is more than my wreath, lovely as it is, would have cost, if sent by the Parcels Delivery Company. But no matter.

Your ever affectionate

ELLA.

P.S.—I have not told you all the Ripple's message. That I reserve till we meet.

Lives there the man with soul so dead to all the simpler forms of melody, who does not know The Legacy; who, if a flutist, has not tooted it, in earlier days, until himself was satiated, his friends disgusted, with the strain? Yet it is a pretty thing—a touching conceit. Only when we apply the test of fact and practice, does its rich absurdity come out in full force.

What friend, however attached to the testator, but would experience some embarrassment, if, in his executorial capacity, it fell to his lot to wait upon a young lady, carrying under his arm a jar, neatly packed

and ticketed, and address her in the following words. It may be as well first to quote the poem :

When in death I shall calm recline,  
O bear my heart to my mistress dear.  
Tell her it lived on her smiles divine,  
Of brightest hue while it lingered here.  
Bid her not shed one tear of sorrow,  
To sully those cheeks so blooming and bright,  
But ruddier drops from the red grape borrow,  
To bathe the relic from morn to night.

Prose translation :

"It is my melancholy duty, my dear Miss Picklethwayte, to place in your hands this—this—preparation—once representing the vital principle of my late most estimable friend, Mr. Adolphus Allsup, Putney Lower Common.

"It was sustained—poor Allsup charged me to observe—chiefly, if not exclusively, by certain facial gestures of yours in which he took singular pleasure.

"I am to request you, my dear young lady, not to shed tears, since such could not fail to be unbecoming to a countenance so fair, but to adopt the more practical course of plunging this very interesting relic in wine, obtained merely as a loan ('borrow' is the word in the will) from red grapes, and to repeat the process, from dawn till sunset, for an indefinite period. Shall I—on the sideboard? Thanks. Good morning."

It is chiefly in the matter of chorus that British invention seems to falter. All connexion with the ballad proper is too frequently let go, and a jumble of unmeaning words substituted. Surely that is bad musical policy. The essence of a chorus is its heartiness, and who, let us ask, could join, with anything approaching to enthusiasm, in such a refrain as that which we find appended to a touching lyric by Mr. Henry Walker, once very popular as the Seven Dials Tragedy :

With his diddle de dump de di de do,  
His diddle de dump de day,  
His diddle de dump de di de do,  
Diddle de dump de day.

This may mean much, but it expresses so little, that we are quite content the stanza should remain, as it is stated to be, peculiarly "his," his alone.

There is, however, a mystery, connected with these "his's," taken in the gross, which needs elucidation. We can submit to be brought round to it with ease and gentleness, as in Jack Sheppard's celebrated ditty. "With his chisel so fine, tra la," is an apt and lucid corollary of the foregoing verse. But there

is impertinence, not to say offence, in the exclusively assigning any part of a melody, in which all have been invited to share, to an anonymous "him," of whose claims we have learned nothing. Why should this mysterious stranger be invested with an especial "tooral-ooral?" What title can he urge to a personal and particular "ri-fol-de-ril-de-rol-de-ray?" In another refrain with which we have occasionally met: "With his

Whack fal la! de ral,  
Whack fal la! de rido,  
Whack fal la! de ral,  
Whack fal la! de rido,"

there is a certain rollicking, not to say Irish, lilt, in which one would really be disposed to join, but for the intrusive "with his," which introduces it. Once more we demand, who is "he?" And wherefore should the whacks, as well as the ridos, be especially his?

With infinitely better taste, the author of Billy O'Rourke permits to his chorus a full participation in whatsoever of delight, or profit, may be comprehended in a Killy-ma-crue.

With my Killy-ma-crue, no heart more true  
For Billy O'Rourke in the boughil.

Nay, an instance, unfortunately almost exceptional, occurs to us, in which a direct recognition of ownership is conceded :

With your rum-ti-iddity-ido.

Still it would be more gratifying if the nature of the property were more distinctly defined. What is a rum-ti-iddity-ido? For aught we know it may be a youthful hippopotamus! But, then, if I really had one, shouldn't I know it? Is it pretty? Is it expensive? Can it walk? Do I return it in my tax-paper? Can it be that the payers of "conscience money" to the exchequer adopt that mode of liquidating the claims of the state upon them for an unexpected rum-ti-iddity-ido? Do I lock up mine when leaving the house? Or, when visiting my club, does my rum-ti-iddity-ido accompany me, and remain in the strangers' room; or (with my goloshes) in the hall? There is something startling in finding oneself in possession of a weird, uncanny thing, of whose very existence we were unaware until the ballad revealed and assigned it to us as property. Goodness help us! How long have I had a rum-ti-iddity-ido?

Lord Soulis he sat in Hermitage Castle,  
And beside him Redcap sly.

And, thus, I am sensible of a certain grotesque presence hovering about me even

as I write, criticising my expressions, and grinning spitefully over my bewildered description of itself. Could I, peradventure (the thought is sudden) sell this doubtful thing? Would the Times accept my quiet advertisement: "To be sold, a great bargain, in the finest condition—in fact, as good as new—a first-class RUM-TI-IDDITY-IDO. No trial allowed. Apply, &c."?

But, absurd as nonsense, pure and simple, may appear, it is really preferable to sense misused. Witness the chorus of that time-dishonoured stave, *We won't go Home till Morning*, degraded from an exulting song of victory to the glorification of some booby, whose chief title to the honour is having stuffed a knot of other boobies with more dinner than is good for them, followed by more wine than their wits can away with. For what earthly reason should honest sober folk be roused from needful rest, to be informed that Mr. Robert Caddywould, or Mr. Anthony Cheeper, is esteemed a jolly good fellow, to have that fact pressed upon us with an insistence that at once awakens a suspicion to the contrary, and by no means to be removed by the dictatorial, "So say all of us," as if the verdict of a group of persons, reduced by drink to a condition of semi-idiotcy, must necessarily be without appeal. Wherefore should this insane bellow, long since in its dotage, and at no time possessed of one atom of the wit and epigram that give grace to the drinking songs of other lands, be still occasionally heard in the streets and dining-rooms of polished London?

I have changed my purpose. While this chant survives, I will not part with a single *fal-lal-la*, *tooral-ooral*, or *dump-de-day*, far less my *rum-ti-iddity-ido*!

## NOTES OR GOLD?

BY THE AUTHOR OF "NEVER FORGOTTEN," "FATAL ZERO," &c. &c.

### CHAPTER XXXI. PEACHUM AND LOCKIT.

THE fever which had attacked Mr. Doughty had settled on his lungs, oppressing him with a terrible weight and causing him serious exhaustion. For many days he supported a terrible struggle with death. It was presently known that his senses had returned, but that there was but little hope of his surviving. And there was much regret in Brickford when this became known, as he was charitable and generous. Desperate remedies had to be resorted to, to reduce the inflammation. The patient had but

little strength, but began to grow more and more conscious and self-possessed.

Mr. Nagle found himself at the house as soon as this change became known.

"I presume, sir," he said, haughtily, to the doctor, "you will not oppose my seeing my friend at this crisis."

"On the contrary," said the doctor. "I was going to send for you, as the sight of a familiar face will have a good effect."

"Familiar, indeed," snorted the music-master, "and before you sent one of your pill-boxes into the place. Take care, sir, you are not hoisted on your own petard. I find it difficult to avoid resenting your conduct."

"I had no intention of offending, I assure you," said the other, carelessly; "but come to him now, and speak, I beg of you, in a low voice."

This tone of direction grated on Mr. Nagle, but he felt restrained by what he called the "sanctity of the sick-bed," and said nothing. By-and-bye his time would come, that is, "should the man recover"—a favourite phrase of his—and then he would see.

Greatly changed, and greatly wasted, the figure of the prostrate Mr. Doughty was presented to them. He was scarcely able to speak above a whisper. His eyes lighted up at the sight of his friend, as, indeed, Mr. Nagle noticed, though he did not perceive that it was the association with Corinna that produced this effect. He squeezed Mr. Nagle's hand, and that gentleman was delighted to hear him whisper, "You must not desert me. Promise me—I have much to say to you."

"Never, never," said Mr. Nagle, returning the squeeze with fervency. "You may depend on me." He gave a triumphant glance at the physician, who responded cordially.

"Mr. Nagle is indispensable," he said, "and has been most assiduous in watching over you through the crisis. But you must not talk too much. By-and-bye you can do that." And he gently withdrew Mr. Nagle from the room.

"Now you will understand," he said to him outside, "though you put a wrong construction on the step I was obliged to take yesterday. We must go quietly, and not too fast. And the great point is to protect him from the well-meant irruption of visitors and others."

"I quite understand," said Mr. Nagle with renewed fervour. "The relations are so pushing. They seem to have no decency.



They must be kept out at all hazards. We might divide the duty—take it in watches. I would keep guard when you have to go away; you would relieve me, and so on."

"Oh, that's a very serious way of taking it," said the other, coldly. "We don't want to keep guard exactly. People would naturally think you had some interested designs. No, I shall take care that he shall not be disturbed; and I can depend on my sister in my absence. But as I said, the effect of your name and presence occasionally—and I need not tell you why—will be most valuable."

Again Mr. Nagle felt that he did not like this man. There was an air of authority and patronage he did not relish; yet he did not know how to encounter him, or set him down. He was disturbed, and put out, and went his way home feeling rather helpless, and muttering often that something must be done.

#### CHAPTER XXXII. LADY DUKE IN COUNCIL.

Of all the little band of conspirators—if that be not an inappropriate term for persons who were seeking to carry out their own ends, independently of each other—Lady Duke was the most experienced and skilful. She was a woman of the world, was in a higher sphere of life than the others, and had, besides, been tolerably successful in several schemes, which presented far greater difficulties than the one now on hand. A great deal, too, was in her favour. She had a certain rank and position, and her intelligence showed her at once that the key of the whole fortress was Doctor Spooner. That Malakoff would have to be gained, not by assault, but by stratagem. Accordingly, when it was known that the patient was sensible, she determined, without loss of time, to make a private advance on the fortification which had been assailed in concert so fruitlessly a few days before. "Doughty has made no will, I am convinced. What then can this man's game be? He can do nothing but obstruct, and cannot hope to get much for himself. The other may die before making a will, or before he has strength enough to make one. If the man recovers, his whole trouble is wasted. If he had any cleverness his real game would be to co-operate with the heirs, or one of the heirs, and make an arrangement with them." Lady Duke did not actually utter these words, but the ideas passed through her mind again and again. "If he be the shrewd creature they call him," she

said, "this must have occurred to him long ago. From the Nagles he will get nothing, as they are jealous of him."

As these thoughts were passing through her mind, the servant came to announce that Doctor Spooner wished to see her. The lady smiled, as though some one had paid a tribute to her knowledge of human character.

"It is very kind of you, Doctor Spooner, to come and relieve my anxiety. Sit down," she added, in her most confidential style, "and tell me all about the poor patient."

"You have heard, I suppose, that he is sensible, and so far improving; but still he is in the most critical way."

"Of course," said she. "It is wonderful how you have brought him over it so far."

"I can take very little credit in the matter beyond that of"—and he hesitated—"that of guarding him carefully from all disturbing influences which would have been fatal. I have supported him in the water, as I may say; but the question now is to restore animation, and even life."

"Of course you only did your duty. At least I understood it that way."

"Quite so. But now begins the serious difficulty. I come to tell you that I almost feel myself unequal to what I see is before me. How am I to take on myself the duty of resisting the pressure that will now be put on me? There are so many well-meaning, pressing persons, who are undoubtedly more entitled than I am to assume authority by his bedside—they will override me, that I can foresee. But it will be my duty to oppose them, and that will place me in a position of great delicacy and difficulty."

"I am sure," said Lady Duke, haughtily, "as far as I am concerned nothing of the kind can be said of me. This very day, I will venture to say, you have been invaded by the whole tribe of Nagles, Gardiners, and the rest. I was determined not to go near the place after the scene of the other day, though I sent my servant to inquire."

The doctor bowed.

"Nothing more lady-like or becoming could be conceived than your conduct. And for that very reason I am here now. From your position and rank, I consider you the head of the relations, and the person whom I ought to consult in this matter. The position—my position—as I said before, is becoming very delicate, and I think it is not right that all the responsibility should be cast on me. May I speak frankly and in confidence?"

Lady Duke bowed to him to go on.

"It is no secret here that these Nagles have an extraordinary influence over him. What the foundation of that influence is, you know as well as I do. Now I have reason to believe that they intend to exert that influence presently, in a way that may have most serious results. I understand he has not as yet made any will disposing of his vast property."

At the mention of this word "will," Lady Duke gave a very perceptible start.

"A desperate attempt will be made to induce him to make one, even in his present state. The girl will be introduced. They have tried to do so already, but I have opposed them unflinchingly and with success. From their persistency in this matter, I believe they have not got him to sign anything as yet; but he is under some infatuation as to her, and he certainly has, or will have in a day or two, sufficient glimmer of intelligence to make it extremely difficult to upset such a deed. If I were called as a witness, I would not take on myself to swear that he is incapable of understanding what he was about. But there can be no doubt that, at this moment, he is physically unable to deal with such matters, and that the agitation and excitement would perhaps kill him."

"Then," said Lady Duke, hurriedly, "why hesitate a moment? It must be prevented at all risks."

"But how," said the other, quietly; "you see there is the difficulty. An indecent brawl, not at his door, as we had the other day, but round his bed—that would be the only result. What would you do? What would you authorise me to do?"

"Why, I should say," answered she, readily, "that it was a fair case for discretion—and quiet temporising. As you say, another such scene as that of the other day, would be fatal."

"It would not be so difficult to exclude these Nagles altogether; but then, you see, the agitation——"

"Not to be thought of," she said; "they should be met with their own weapons."

"So I think," he said, "for the sake of the patient himself. Your taking this view encourages me, Lady Duke."

"But as to his state, do you think he will recover?"

"We must all hope so," he said, with a curious look; "if so you will have simply done your duty, and these people will be more firmly established than ever.

They will not, of course, forgive this treatment, but that can't be helped. If, on the other hand, there should be a fatal termination, he will not have been made the prey of comparative strangers, and his relations will, as is only right, not be stripped of their due inheritance."

Lady Duke reflected a moment.

"This is very honourable and creditable on your part; but I do not see how you are to be recompensed for so great a service."

"You are quite right. In whatever way the matter is looked at, it will be seen that nothing can come to me. That rather shabby reward, 'the consciousness of having done one's duty,' is all that I can reasonably look for."

"Then what motive——" said Lady Duke abruptly, "I mean, why should you travel out of your professional course and give yourself so much trouble for nothing?"

He smiled. "You clearly have not much faith in human morality, or in the consciousness of having done one's duty as a satisfactory reward. If," he continued, slowly, "I were to set aside the general interest of the relations, which, as you say, I am not bound to look after particularly, and were to look more to an individual interest, that would make a great difference. I am struggling at a poor profession, and own I should not be above a substantial acknowledgment—not, observe, for any underground proceeding, but for legitimate service; that is, for preventing an indecent scramble among those who are related by blood, and for securing to those who, by their position and rank, are entitled to represent the family, the succession to this inheritance."

Doctor Spooner paused. He saw the fire of avarice in her eyes. She was eager. He had not made a mistake.

"But how—how is it to be managed?"

"By me," he said, "with your assistance. You see this is no combination, as it might vulgarly be considered. We wish merely to defeat the discreditable attempts of others."

"Oh, that I see perfectly," said Lady Duke. "We are for the interests of the deceased—I mean," she said, colouring, "of our patient. It is a proper proceeding; not a word could be said against it. But, of course, the person who brought about such a consummation would look for an exorbitant recompense?"

This she said in an interrogative way. Doctor Spooner answered carelessly:

"That will arise by-and-bye, when the part of the work done shall be an earnest for what is to come. The reward must, of course, be substantial. But the prize is worth it. Neither must it be left to good feeling or generosity, which only produces misconception."

Lady Duke drew up haughtily.

"Oh, I can enter into no bargain of the kind. That is too dangerous a business."

"I do not ask you," he said. "By-and-bye you will be pressing and asking me. It will be all left to your own choice. You will move in the matter, Lady Duke, never fear. This is merely a little preliminary interchange of ideas. Meanwhile, I have come to you to ask advice. Now I must return to the—I must not say deceased, as you did, Lady Duke—but to my patient."

"I am glad we have come to this wise understanding. It will contribute largely to his benefit."

On this Doctor Spooner took his leave.

Lady Duke sat after his departure full of thought, her eyes resting on her table, which was covered with some very forcible stimulants to action, in the shape of bills, and letters pressing for payment of the bills. The family, indeed, was in such a situation, that a crisis was not very far off. Her son had been found perfectly useless as a resource, though something might be done with him later; there was still less to be hoped for from her daughter, who might as well be sent back to the finishing school—only the "lady principal's" letters were the most pressing in the heap of applications on the table. All, therefore, lay with herself; scruples were a luxury she could not indulge in at such a crisis. Money must be had; the family credit of the Dukes must be saved at all risks; and the money of this poor sick Doughty must be left to her. In a very few minutes she had two or three plans of action before her, and she determined not to lose a moment in trying the first.

#### CHAPTER XXXIII. LADY DUKE'S MOVE.

THE music-master's daughter, now the heroine of Brickford, was no romantic dreamer, dwelling on her own sufferings with a soft complacency and satisfaction, but was determined to carry out the scheme she had announced. There was in her mind, too, a lofty purpose of self-chastisement—a calm resolve to suffer a stern penalty for the light trifling, for the careless encouragement with which she

had brought suffering on two persons who loved her. Not that she had now even a remnant of regard or toleration for the young gentleman, whose abrupt departure had made her the object of the smiles, and, perhaps, pity of the town. This odd fashion of withdrawal had revealed to her the cowardice and selfishness of her late admirer, who felt too guilty or too timorous even to explain the reasons for his abandonment of her, and chose to skulk off in a way that was cheapest, and would cause him least trouble and annoyance. It was all over, therefore, with that episode, and she could look back on it with perfect calmness. As for the patient who was lying stricken with sickness, and whose noble devotion to her was being revealed to her more and more as she looked back on all that had occurred, her impulse would have been to have flown to his side, to have watched over and tended him. "What would be said in Brickford" as to such a proceeding would have been only a challenge to her to carry it out with defiance, and she would feel a joyful pride in provoking their most spiteful criticisms. Nay, she would have welcomed them. But she felt that she had deserved punishment, and in a stern self-denial and self-sacrifice was resolved to find it. Out on the world, therefore, she would face the practical difficulties of life, and in working her way to success, and perhaps triumph, would leave the romance of life behind her, and never look back. With this resolve she was quietly preparing for her journey, when she was told that Lady Duke wished to see her, and was waiting in the drawing-room.

Corinna went down at once. The woman of the world looked at her curiously, and then began a sort of apology for her son's behaviour.

"I frankly tell you," she said, "that I never approved of the business from the beginning, both for your sake and for his. He is a changeable creature, and I told him he had no right to amuse himself with a mere passing flirtation, at the expense of—"

"If it be for this that you have come to me," said Corinna, haughtily, "I beg that you will not say anything more on the subject. I can assure you it has given me no distress or uneasiness whatever."

"It delights me to hear you say so," said the lady. "I knew you would look at the matter in its proper light. Young men will be young men, as we all know."

"That is another view," said Corinna. "Though if the matter were to be judged seriously, I do not think it could be dismissed so lightly as you suppose. I am glad you are here, that you may know that I had no feeling for your son beyond being flattered at the attention with which he was pleased to distinguish me. You must allow for my situation—a poor music-master's daughter. Let us say no more on the subject, if you please."

"With all my heart. Still, you see, I was not so far out in my judgment. You were naturally affected by the very marked partiality shown to you in another quarter. Of course I have no scruple in alluding to this. Mr. Doughty's attachment was evident to every one, and the talk of Brickford."

Corinna looked at the lady of quality steadily, and, after a pause, said, calmly:

"Is this the subject you have come to speak to me on?"

A little embarrassed, Lady Duke replied:

"Why, no. I tell you frankly I came for some news as to Mr. Doughty's state. Your father being *ami de la maison*, and no one else being admitted, I suppose for all proper reasons, I came to the fountain head. You are said to be acting like a perfect sister of charity, and but for you it is believed he would never have got over the crisis."

"I have never seen him once since he was taken ill," said Corinna.

"Never once?" said Lady Duke, scanning her narrowly.

"Never," said Corinna. "So much for the value of the reports that you have heard."

"What gossips there are in this place," said Lady Duke, in well-feigned surprise.

"There is no end to the stories. He worships you with a sort of dotage. And, indeed, it is supposed that you are to get all his money, for the poor dear sick creature can't be with us very long."

Every word of this cruel speech was a stab to Corinna, sharp stroke after stroke. Her relation to Mr. Doughty, and what was repeated about the place on the sub-

ject, had of course been present to her clear eye, but until that moment it had never assumed such a bold and even hideous shape. The picture that Lady Duke suggested almost scared her.

After a moment's pause she said, in a voice which she tried should appear steady, and fixing her eyes on Lady Duke:

"I think I appreciate the motive that has brought you here to tell me this. I may say that I know it."

The woman of the world grew uncomfortable under that steady gaze, and felt more guilty than she had done for many years.

"But it does not touch me. No; not in the least. If I cared for your opinion, I would know that you are paying me a sort of compliment; for you know well what is the intended effect of what you have just said. But you might have spared me, and spared yourself, the humiliation. I had determined to quit this place before you came in. I leave it to-morrow."

Lady Duke gave a genuine start of surprise.

"I am not flying from ill-nature. If I chose to be insensible, I would prefer to stay, and let you find out, and feel, what power I have. But what I cannot endure is— But no matter, I go. There is my trunk, packed and corded, as you may tell your friends in Brickford."

Lady Duke was utterly crushed; her pleasure at the withdrawal of such a dangerous rival being overpowered in her wonder at what "the girl could be at." She could only rise and murmur:

"It is really wonderful, and shows a very proper feeling. It is quite Spartan of you, and indeed I always will say that you have behaved admirably all through the affair."

So she determined that she would say, of course, to the patient, or to those likely to repeat her speech to the patient. Treading on air, as the phrase goes, and full of exaltation, she took her leave; and almost before she reached the street the veteran schemer had a new plan ready, which she prepared to execute at once, and set off straight to Mr. Doughty's house.

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